DEWAN'S REPLY: Government are very keen and most anxious, Mr. Janardana Pillai, to stamp out corruption. No representation with that end in view will be resented. But, such representations must be made in good faith; and the officer against whom a charge is made, must be given every opportunity to answer the charge, and must not be unfairly punished or removed on flimsy grounds, on grounds not supported by evidence. Government will not allow prestige to stand in their way of checking corruption, favouritism and high-handedness. But, I do not entirely agree with you in one particular point. I think that this is a matter in which the public can help the Government very much. They should not have the fear to which you alluded.

Your suggestion about the members of the Legislative Council being given certain privileges, will be considered.

MEMBER: There are officers who have been found corrupt by the Government and who have subsequently been promoted.

DEWAN: That will be looked into.

179. Some urgent administrative reforms.

MR. N. K. PADMANABHA PILLAI (*Neyyattinkara taluk, Group I*) said that twenty-eight years ago when His late Highness Sri Mulam Tirunal constituted the Assembly, it was considered as an institution of unparallelled importance and its inauguration a measure fraught with the greatest possibilities. And so it proved to be in the long years that intervened. But the times changed and the Assembly in its existing form ceased to serve its purpose. When the Assembly was first constituted, the Legislative Council was mainly an official body, mainly functioning for legislative purposes. The Assembly was therefore constituted with the definite object of bringing the Government into direct touch with the people's representatives and ascertaining their needs and aspirations. This purpose was admirably served by the Assembly until the Legislative Council was reconstituted with enlarged functions and powers. Since then the members of the Assembly had been repeatedly urging on the attention of the Government the urgent necessity of reforming the Assembly. It was however gratifying that His Highnes the Maha Raja was graciously pleased to satisfy the popular aspirations in this direction by making an announcement on the occasion of his assuming ruling powers that the Assembly would be reconstituted on a statutory basis, with enlarged powers and functions. The member wanted to take the opportunity to request the Dewan to convey to His Highness the Maha Raja the feelings of gratitude of the members of the Assembly for responding so readily to the popular wishes on the subject.

In connection with the reform of the Assembly, one of the important suggestions the member made was that the Assembly should have a right to move and discuss resolutions on matters of general public interest. As it was, the proceedings of the Assembly were dull and monotonous and the opinion expressed by one member on any

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

subject could not be taken to be the opinion of the people at large. If, on the other hand, the right to discuss such questions was granted and the members were allowed to vote on them, the result would be satisfactory both to the people and to the Government.

It was not desirable that there should be unnecessary duplication of functions between the Assembly and the Legislative Council. This should be avoided, as far as possible, so that conflicts might not arise between the two institutions. Members of the Assembly should, however, have power to ask interpellations and discuss the principles of legislative measures before they are introduced in the Council. The franchise for the Assembly should be broadened, but it should be different from that for the Council. The composition of the Assembly might also be revised on some basis such as the population of each taluk. The number of nominated members should be reduced, a few seats being reserved for minority communities alone. It was immaterial if in the revision of the constitution the total number of members was slightly reduced. Wiith enlarged powers and functions a slightly smaller body would be able to do much better business.

Practically, the Legislative Council was almost on a par with the Assembly. There was an elected majority, but its voice was but a cry in the wilderness. The resolutions passed in the Council were not accepted by the Government. If the State should move in line with progressive administrations elsewhere, it was high time that radical changes in the constitution and powers of the Council were made. Important departments of the State consuming fabulous amounts, such as the Devaswom, Railway, etc,. were beyond the purview of the Council. It had no elected President; nor had it the power of electing a Deputy President, a privilege enjoyed by the sister State of Cochin. In the near future when the all-India Federation Scheme materialised, substantial changes would have to be effected in the Legislature of the State, se as to enable her to claim her share in the Federation.

The next step towards constitutional development was to make the Executive responsible to a Legislature constituted on right lines. Responsible government was only a natural corollary to the inauguration of a second chamber. A new orientation of the administrative system by the inauguration of a popular government by a cabinet of ministers elected by the two houses, was the cherished dream of the people. It was true that the State enjoyed a constitutional monarchy. But to derive the full benefit of the constitutional monarchy the establishment of responsible gov. rnment was imperative. The people suffered greatly on account of the irresponsibility of the officers functioning under constitutional monarchs. Responsible government was long overdue. The people of the State could boast of an enlightment and culture which was the envy of people elsewhere. There was a high percentage of literates in the country. In female education too the State was far advanced. These facts showed that the people were quite fit for responsible government.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

It would be seen from the proceedings of the past several sessions of the Assembly that the representatives of the people had been repeatedly urging for an Executive responsible to the Legislature. But the replies given on those occasions were invariably of an evasive character. While unhesitatingly admitting the importance of the question and the relevancy of the request, the former Dewans had attempted to shove the whole responsibility on the Sovereigns by saying that they would do the needful at the fit and proper time. The member hoped that under the altered conditions the constitutional progress of the State would not be hampered any further and that the aspirations of the people would be speedily realised.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Constitutional changes, Mr. Padmanabha Pillai, are bound to come in the near future; and your suggestions will doubtless be considered at the time.

180. The policy of retrenchment and reforms in the State.

MR. P. N. MADHAVAN PILLAI (*Trivandrum taluk, Group I*): said that the time had come when retrenchment of expenditure was a matter of utmost importance both to the Government and the people. The balancing of the budget was as much important as the lightening of the tax-payer's burden or finding ways and means to increase his paying capacity. The existing financial condition would necessitate a reduction by 8 per cent. in the total expenditure. Taking into account the irreducible items of expenditure such as the expenditure under Palace, Political, Defence, etc., an all round cut of 10 per cent. was essential. In case the lower ranks of the service were to be left untouched, the cut necessitated would be not less than 20 per cent. A relentless cut of at least 15 per cent. in the expenditure should therefore be effected immediately.

The most equitable of the taxes imposed on the people was income-tax. There was much scope for improving the collection under this item by preventing evasion of legitimate payments. Payment was evaded by merchants by maintaining duplicate account books, one for private use and another for production before the Income Tax authorities. The Government should insist on maintaining account books in forms approved by them, with the seal of the Income tax Officer on every page of the account book. One other important tax under direct taxation was land revenue. In spite of attempts to simplify and systematise the land tenures, complications still survived and glaring inequalities in the burden of taxation existed. *Rajabhogam* tax on alienated *jenmam* lands varied from one-eighth to one-fourth. A holder of land of the *otti-vilakkam* tenure had to pay a very heavy tax compared to his neighfour holding an equal extent of land under similar circumstances. Demand notices were often issued without making any personal demand. Sometimes it happened that the demand notices were for amounts less than the cost of notices themselves. The cost of establishment and of collection was 25 per cent. This should be reduced to 20 per cent.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly